

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
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AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: ;DS

TAGS: PINT, UR, EAGR

SUBJECT: THOUGHTS ON THE NON-APPEARANCES AT KULAKOV BURIAL

REF: MOSCOW 17037

1. WE FOUND THE EMBASSY'S ANALYSIS OF THE NON-APPEARANCES
AT THE KULAKOV FUNERAL THOUGHT PROVOKING AND USEFUL.

2. WE AGREE THAT THE VIOLATION OF FUNERAL PROTOCOL BY THE
TOP LEADERS WAS ONE OF THE MORE SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL
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HAPPENINGS OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE SINCE THE OUSTER OF PODGORNYY.
HOWEVER, WE DO NOT HAVE AN ENTIRELY SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION
OF THIS PUZZLING EVENT.

3. THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT KULAKOV IN DEATH HAS BEEN
SLIGHTED BY THE TOP POLITICAL LEADERS. BREZHNEV'S DECISION
TO STAY IN THE CRIMEA RATHER THAN ATTEND THE FUNERAL COULD

BE JUSTIFIED IN PART BY HIS INFIRMITIES AND HIS TALKS WITH HUSAK. THE RATIONALE FOR THE ABSENCE OF THE OTHERS IS NOT AS OBVIOUS; SOME MAY HAVE BEEN ON VACATION, OTHERS ILL, OR PREOCCUPIED. BUT SINCE THE ABSENTEES COVER THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, IT IS DIFFICULT TO LINK THEIR DECISION WITH DISAPPROVAL OF ISSUES OR INITIATIVES CONNECTED PRIMARILY TO BREZHNEV SUCH AS THE AGRO-COMPLEXES. AND ALTHOUGH THE MEAT

SHORTAGE REMAINS AS BAD AS EVER, THIS YEAR'S GRAIN CROP LOOKS PROMISING. THE STRUGGLE FOR FARM INVESTMENTS LOOKS MORE INTERESTING AS A POSSIBLE CAUSE, BUT BREZHNEV'S JULY FLOOR OF 27 PERCENT IMPLIES TO US THAT A DRIVE TO REDUCE THE FIGURE MAY HAVE BEEN UNDERWAY BEFORE THE PLENUM. THE POSSIBILITY OF PERSONALITY/POWER DIFFERENCES, TOO, CANNOT BE EXCLUDED. WE NOTE THAT KULAKOV'S STATUS INDICATORS AT THE JULY SUPREME SOVIET SESSION WERE AGAIN HIGH AFTER SOME SOFTNESS THIS SPRING, AND THAT HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM YUGOSLAVIA WHERE HE REPRESENTED THE CPSU AT THE PARTY CONGRESS. FINALLY, THE ATTENDANCE OF ROMANOV AND MASHEROV AT THE FUNERAL THOROUGHLY CONFUSES THE PICTURE SINCE SHCHERBITSKIY CHOSE TO STAY IN KIEV AND ADDRESS A PARTY PLENUM ON AGRICULTURE.

4. ANOTHER THOUGHT RAISED BY THE POOR ATTENDANCE AT KULAKOV'S FUNERAL IS WHETHER OR NOT THE FUNERAL PROTOCOL MAY CHANGE AS THE FINAL DAYS OF THE SENIOR LEADERS RUN
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OUT. ONE EVENT DOES NOT MAKE A PATTERN, OF COURSE, BUT WE ARE REMINDED BY THE KULAKOV FUNERAL THAT PRECEDENTS CAN BE BROKEN, AND RECALL OUR DISBELIEF THAT MAY DAY WAS TO BE ENTIRELY CIVILIAN DECADE AGO. IN THIS CASE, PROTOCOL WAS BROKEN TO GIVE A MESSAGE, BUT THE FINAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVENT IS NOT YET CLEAR TO US. HOWEVER, WE COMMEND THE EMBASSY'S REPORTING ON ITS OBSERVATIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP AND WELCOME ITS FURTHER REPORTING AND REFLECTIONS. VANCE

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